

woman being asked, “I’ve always been curious. What’s your ethnic background?” to which she replies, “Woman.”

This anthology succeeds in fostering individual reflection as well as heightening social consciousness. The book moves in kaleidoscopic fashion from one place to another without becoming tiresome; each compelling story introduces us to women who, though we are meeting them for the first time, remind us of parts of ourselves. The stories vary in their level of literary craft; some are by well-known authors and others are by women never before published. By virtue of this variety, each reader is encouraged to tell her own story, to value her own perception. *The Stories We Hold Secret* is part of a brave beginning to move women’s issues from the abstract to the concrete by providing a forum for women writing about their lives; let us hope there will be a growing audience to hear and understand.

—Nancy K. Herzberg  
Eastport, Maine

**Michelle Cliff. *The Land of Look Behind*. (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985) 119 pp., \$13.95; \$6.95 paper.**

“The world is white no longer, and it will never be again.”

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

“It was never a question of passing. It was a question of hiding.”

Michelle Cliff, *The Land of Look Behind*

Passing and its effect on the individual is one of the themes that Michelle Cliff explores in her book, *The Land of Look Behind*. Passing is a recurring theme in much of the literature written by people of color both past and present. In much of this literature passing is detrimental to the character. In her attempt to hide her color, Clare Kendry from Nella Larsen’s *Passing* destroys her inner self long before her actual death. When a person does not have a developed sense of self-identity, the self can be lost within any situation.

In the poem “Within the Veil” Cliff states, “Unless you quit your passing, honey—you only gonna come to woe.”

Color ain’t no faucet  
You can’t turn it off and on  
I say, color ain’t no faucet  
You can’t turn it off and on  
Tell the world who you are  
Or you might as well be gone

These words from Cliff’s poem add a haunting reflection to Clare Kendry’s life and death.

The importance of self-identity is expressed in prose and poetry of "Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise."

My blood commenced early. The farther back you go the thicker it becomes. And the mother is named the link, the carrier—the source of the Nile. Did she attend each birth with caution? Waiting to see the degree of our betrayal?

The issue of color is unfortunately, as Du Bois so accurately pointed out, of utmost importance. Cliff also tells us in her prose piece, "If I Could Write This in Fire, I Would Write This in Fire."

Color was the symbol of our potential: color taking in hair "Quality," skin tone, freckles, nose width, eyes. Those of us who were light-skinned, straight-haired, etc., were given to believe that we could actually attain whiteness—or at least the qualities of the colonizer which made him superior.

*The Land of Look Behind* is a creative blend of prose and poetry. It is filled with stark images, from the slaughter of a pig: "A small knife is inserted in her throat, pulled back and forth until the throat slits, the wound widens, and blood runs over, covering the yard"; to slavery: "A pregnant woman is to be whipped—they dig a hole to accommodate her belly and place her face down on the ground."

This unique book is filled with music of Toni Morrison's Sulu and the mules and men of Zora Neale Hurston. In "Travel Notes" we hear the music of the River Ouse before Virginia Woolf walks into it.

Michelle Cliff is strongest in her prose where her vision is not constrained within the poetic verse. In the poem, "A Visit from Mr. Botha," the subject matter is strong, but some of the lines of the poem are weak because of their forced end rhymes:

Send them flying into crowds with armored lorries  
That should begin to put aside your worries.

*The Land of Look Behind* is a journey through a history that still lives.

—Aisha Eshe  
Iowa State University

**James D. Cockcroft. *Outlaws in the Promised Land: Mexican Immigrant Workers and America's Future*. (New York: Grove Press, 1986) 306 pp., \$19.95 cloth, \$10.95 paper.**

In place of myths about Mexican immigrant workers, Cockcroft establishes several well-founded realities. One is that the border is porous because U.S. business interests want it that way so they can have cheap labor to exploit as needed by means of a border "revolving door." Another is that there is such an interrelated U.S.-Mexico economy, achieved through "silent integration," that in effect the border is a legal fiction. A third is that Mexican "undocumented" workers contribute substantially more to the U.S. economy than they take out. A fourth is